

# Piloting Changes to Prepare First-Time Combat Soldiers for Today's Battlefields

**Commander  
COL James K. Greer**

Infusing warrior ethos into each and every soldier, regardless of military occupational specialty, is one of the key lessons learned from the current operational environment (COE) in Iraq. The Chief of Staff, Army, convened Task Force Warrior at Fort Benning, Georgia, to determine key warrior tasks and drills required to help first-time combat soldiers develop warrior ethos that would enable them to fight, survive, and win on today's battlefields. Based on Task Force Warrior results, only 16 of the 40 core warrior tasks, and only 3 of the 9 core warrior drills, are trained in the current basic combat training (BCT) program of instruction (POI). To prepare soldiers for combat and relieve gaining units of the entire responsibility for training these tasks and drills, this training must start during initial entry training (IET). Two iterations of BCT pilots that included these concepts were recently conducted by the 1st Armor Training Brigade (1ATB) at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

D Company, 2d Battalion, 46th Infantry Regiment, 1ATB, began its first pilot on 8 January 2004. One of the key components of infusing warrior ethos and training core warrior tasks and drills is limiting the ratio of privates to drill sergeants. During the BCT pilots, the number of soldiers was limited to 200 (normally around 240), and the number of drill sergeants was increased to 16 (normally 12). This provided the opportunity for drill sergeants to train soldiers at a 12.5:1 ratio, instead of a 20:1 ratio, which is more typical of a BCT cycle. With a lower ratio, drill sergeants get to know soldiers and can better train them by providing more personal attention, compared to dealing with larger groups. Soldiers who need more help can be given more attention, and drill sergeants have more time to develop emerging leaders as well. Moreover, many soldiers respond better to smaller group settings and more one-on-one attention, instead of getting lost in larger groups.

Most officer educational system (OES) and noncommissioned officer educational system (NCOES) training is done using the small-group concept, and the same idea was applied to the BCT pilots for most of the same reasons. As a drill ser-



geant deals with his squad, he also gains experience he can apply when he has completed his tour and returns to the force. This small-group experience is more relevant to the force because soldiers and cadre are immersed in experiences that identify with the COE. The 1ATB is incorporating this concept into tanker, scout, and mechanic one-station unit training (OSUT) by surging instructors to key training events, such as field training exercises (FTX), to create favorable ratios with small-group benefits.

Another key portion of the BCT pilot was challenging soldiers to operate in the COE. Instead of an administrative or garrison setting, many training events were linked to tactical scenarios conducted in the COE. During this training event, soldiers were exposed to a violent, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, including encountering improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnance, applying rules of engagement to civilians on the battlefield (COBs), media on the battlefield, and operating in an urban environment. We acquired several World War II barracks, which were scheduled to be torn down, and upgraded them to conduct urban operations during BCT. Our tankers, scouts, and mechanics also incorporated these ideas into their OSUT training.

The capstone for C Company, 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry Regiment, 1ATB, was constructing and conducting operations out of the forward operating based (FOB) down range for the last 23 training days of BCT. The current BCT POI calls for a 3-day FTX, but the last 23 days of training for our "immersion" pilot was conducted in the field and based out of the

**Command Sergeant Major  
CSM David L. Morris**

FOB. Here, soldiers and cadre were truly immersed in the COE, and a tactical setting, as they lived and trained out of the FOB for 23 days. In addition to moving tactically to and from daily training events, every minute in the field became a learning experience for soldiers as they mentally and physically coped with tactical challenges of living in an FOB, and constant exposure and mentoring from drill sergeants. While participating in ongoing BCT POI lessons, soldiers also learned to man checkpoints, man guard towers, operate supply convoys, perform field physical training, manage personal hygiene, and apply tactical questioning as part of the "every soldier on patrol" concept. BCT soldiers were constantly kept on their toes by the COE opposing force, civilians on the battlefield, and the media who conducted daily activities outside the wire, approached checkpoints, and probed positions. During these 23 days in the field, soldiers were immersed in warrior ethos and learned to speak Army Values and Ethos as a first language.

The BCT pilots will include additional training on combatives, weapons, and additional equipment not usually trained in BCT. Most important to the changes in BCT, advanced individual training, and OSUT will be the overall change in culture from a peacetime mindset to one of an Army that must train soldiers for war. Changes to the culture must come from senior leaders through drill sergeants and instructors, who recognize the importance of infusing Army Values and warrior ethos, who will train the core warrior drills and tasks, and who will resource these efforts.

During World War II, IET transitioned from a shorter, large-group, garrison, and lecture format to a longer, small-group, field tactical training course to meet the needs of a Nation, Army, and soldiers at war. We are at war again and will be for the foreseeable future, so adjusting our training to meet the current threat and give our soldiers and Army the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to fight, survive, and win is a must.

Please continue to send comments to 1ATB at:

*jose.pena@knox.army.mil*